SPAWN
THE DARK AGES
SPAWN.COM
14
DIGITAL EDITION

TODD McFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT

14 | THE CHILD'S CRUSADE PART V

DEDICATED TO
MY SON, LORCAN

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SPAWN THE DARK AGES 13 SUMMARY

Even with Covenant's help in battle, Maeve's army suffers great losses. At the court of King John, the king is concerned about Maeve's loyalties, and sends emissaries to either have her sign an oath of loyalty to the crown or be killed. Spawn and Cog confront each other, with Spawn determined to kill Cog in exchange for his freedom; however, Cog tells him freedom will only come by joining the pagan forces. Spawn will let the outcome be determined in battle, and returns to get his troops ready for the final conflict.

SPAWN CREATED BY
TODD McFARLANE

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Elsewhere, a man of dark ambition invokes certain rites, preparing himself mind, body and soul, hoping to harness the pagan spirits of the ancient Greenworld.

From a distance, an army sent by a king.
Sent to insure that right will win the day.
And in the warrior girl's camp, a reluctant champion emerges from the shadows.
It is time.
This is how the day begins...

The day of my undoing...
I should never have doubted you Maeve. Cogliostro he's a madman. These dark forces he is trafficking with... I fear they may be beyond our scope.
Have faith, Covenant. That is all I have ever asked, and indeed all I need ask. All will be set right before this day is done.
But there is something else to consider... I have certain powers of my own. Powers which I have not used for years beyond counting.

I have forsworn them, for I know they are spawned from hell's pit.
But they are great powers indeed. Perhaps, just this once, in the service of greater good...
No. Look at me. You must not risk your soul to save our lives. You have come so far in these few weeks.
It is your strength of heart, not your dark curse which will win the day.
That is why God chose you, why he sent me to you.
Have faith, Covenant. Have faith and God will have mercy. You will see.

Soon, the sharp tattoo of war drums splits the air. And it so begins...
Onward!
In the name of God our Father, we fight. May the good lord forgive us for what we are about to do.

It's a great bloody mess.
An army of children warring against a gang of mindless thugs.
They are a miserable bunch -- slaves, prisoners, half-starved and snarling like wild beasts.
Their veins are filled with potions, driving them to murder lust. Their brains are fevered.
But their limbs are strong and they feel no pain. They will not retreat.
They will not stop until they are dead.

Wave after wave of these soul-dead wretches come, each one cut down is soon replaced by another.
Haaaah!
For God, for England and Saint George!

This is hell, the children think. The earth has split open and the hordes of perdition have escaped.
Blood, sweat and smoke cover their faces, burning their eyes.
Covenant! Quickly.
The children's own bloodlust grows. And from nearby, great flames leap over the treetops.

The wicker men. There must be a dozen of them. Great towering effigies set ablaze as a sacrifice to appease the old gods.
And tumbling from its crackling innards are countless more of the rabid beast-men.
One by one, the Hellspawn topples the straw men.
And then despatches their occupants.

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In another life, he fought in the Crusades. He was baptized in battle on the blood-soaked fields of the Holyland.
Yet nothing he has seen compares to the carnage he sees this day. And so he goes.

By midday, the sun has not yet burned through the gloom.

But the fields fall silent.

For a moment no one speaks.

No one even breathes.

We've won! By the providence of God in Heaven, we are victortous!
Father, I have avenged you!
HUZZAH!
HUZZAH!
HUZZAH!

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You've won nothing.

They watch in stunned silence as she falls.
And soon they join her.
From the nearby hills, they come roaring. The real army of Pagan Warlords.
Strong and cruel and well organized.

The fool children had been led up a path, like lambs to the slaughter.
Amid the smoke and blood, the Hellspawn screams like the bellows of hell...

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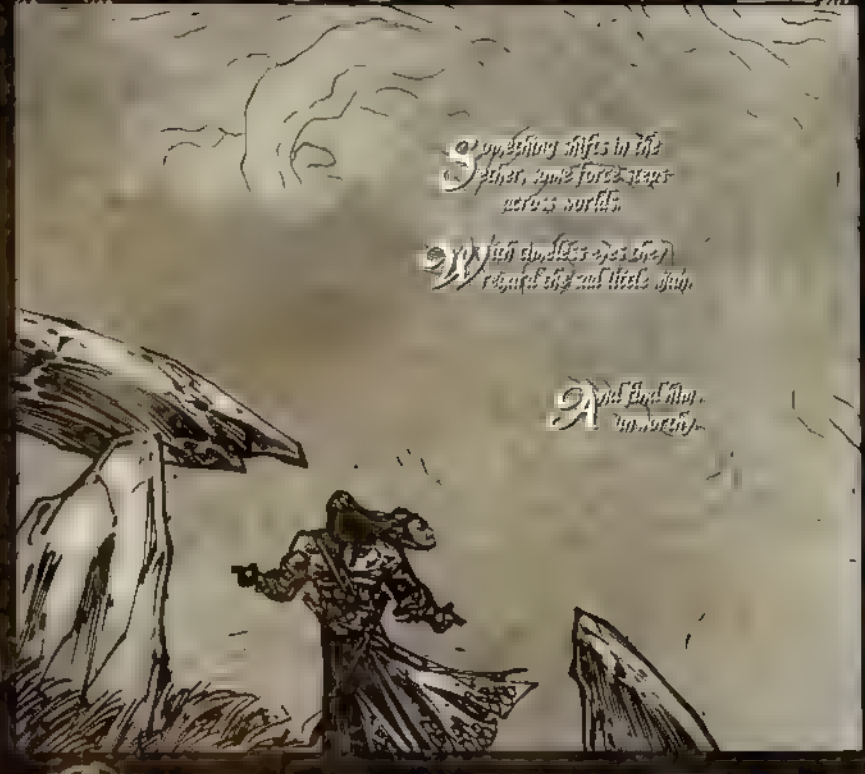
And with a great purging, unleashes the dark power that lies inside him
In seconds, it is over.
Or nearly so.
Cagliostro! Show yourself. Look at what you've done!

But the old bastard is elsewhere. Chanting his magic words, and working his arcane spells.
What was called for was a sacrifice. And that sacrifice required blood. Blood in copious amounts.
Οσχαρ Σομε αρχανε συμβολσ ηερε, πλεασε

The fool girl and her pet Ogre unwittingly provided it for him.


Something shifts in the ether, some force steps across worlds.
With shoulders set and head regarded high and little daunted.
And finds him in worlds.

Covenant cradles the lifeless body of the maiden Maeve. How small she seems. He'd never really noticed till now.

No hell can hold greater torment than this. No crueler thing is there than to give a man hope.

He still hears her voice, so simple, so childlike, echoing in his mind... "Have faith and God will have mercy."

Foolish thing, he had actually believed her.

Ho! what sight is this?
Alas, we have arrived too late.
What is that... beast?

'Tis the devil himself come to steal away the Child Saint!

Oh, sweet child... sweet blessed child... forgive us.
Begone foul tempter. She's not for the likes of you!
We have indeed come too late.

And so our story ends, as it began... with a boat on the sea. History would remember the maiden warrior and her troupe, and sing their praises in story and song. How they repelled an unknown evil, and how in her darkest hour the Devil came to snatch her away, but found her spirit to pure to cage... and that the Devil himself wept.

Lord Covenant would live to have many more adventures, some epic, many tragic, until the dark day when his master would finally come and claim his soul.

As for me, I left England to wander the world again. The forces of the Greenworld had slipped beyond my grasp. Perhaps it was Covenant's meddling that fouled the deal. Perhaps it was my own arrogance. It matters not. I am doomed to walk this wicked world, never resting, never dying. Until I can find an answer, a way out. But mark my words, one day I shall be free. If I have to topple the very walls of Heaven to do it, I will. I shall escape this curse which has tracked me century upon century like a shadow... the Curse of the Hellspawn.

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